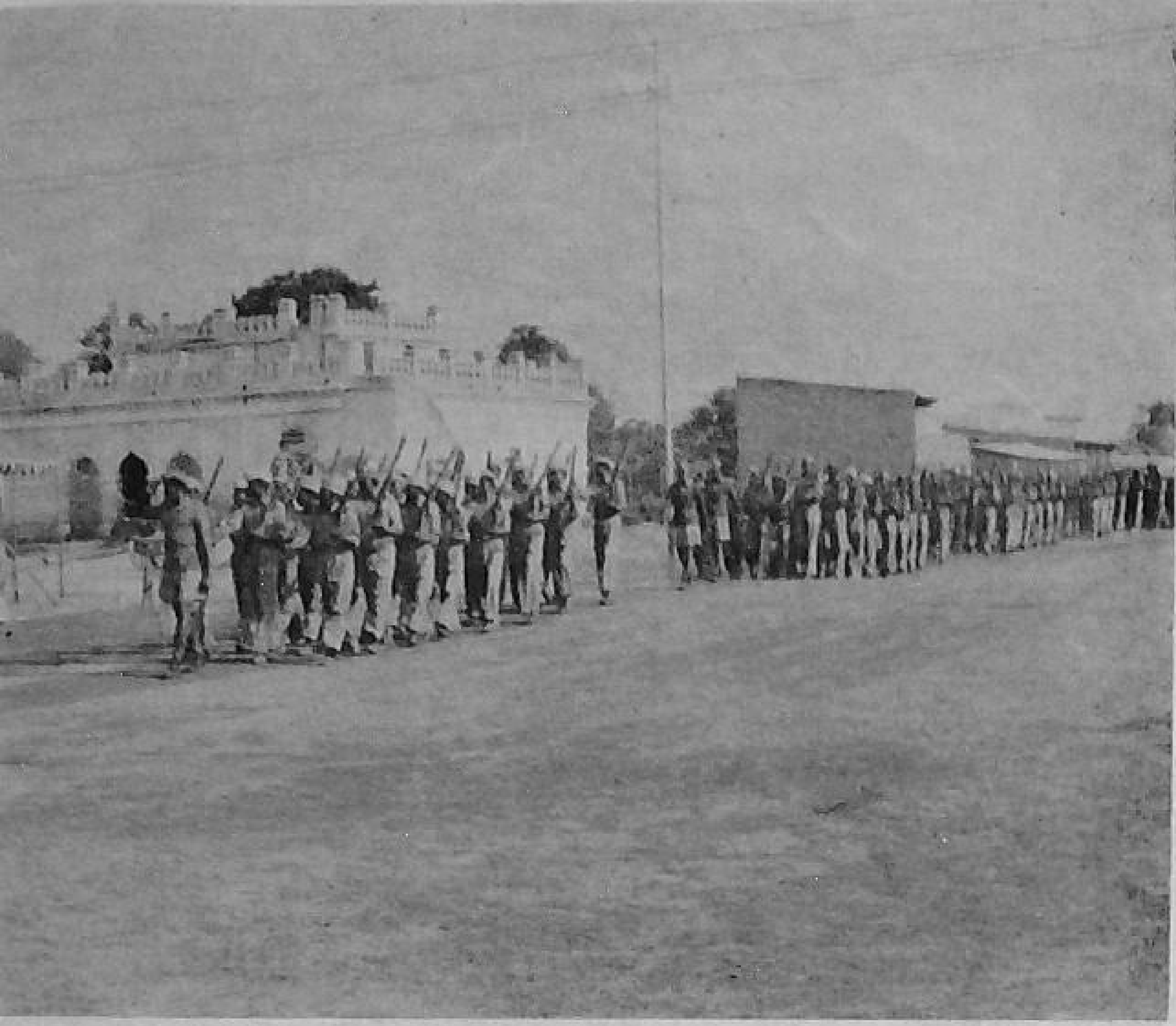
Panchayati Raj

MAY 1963

Uniform or no uniform, they are soldiers on the home-front. Members of the Village Volunteer Force in Rajasthan, receiving Rifle training.

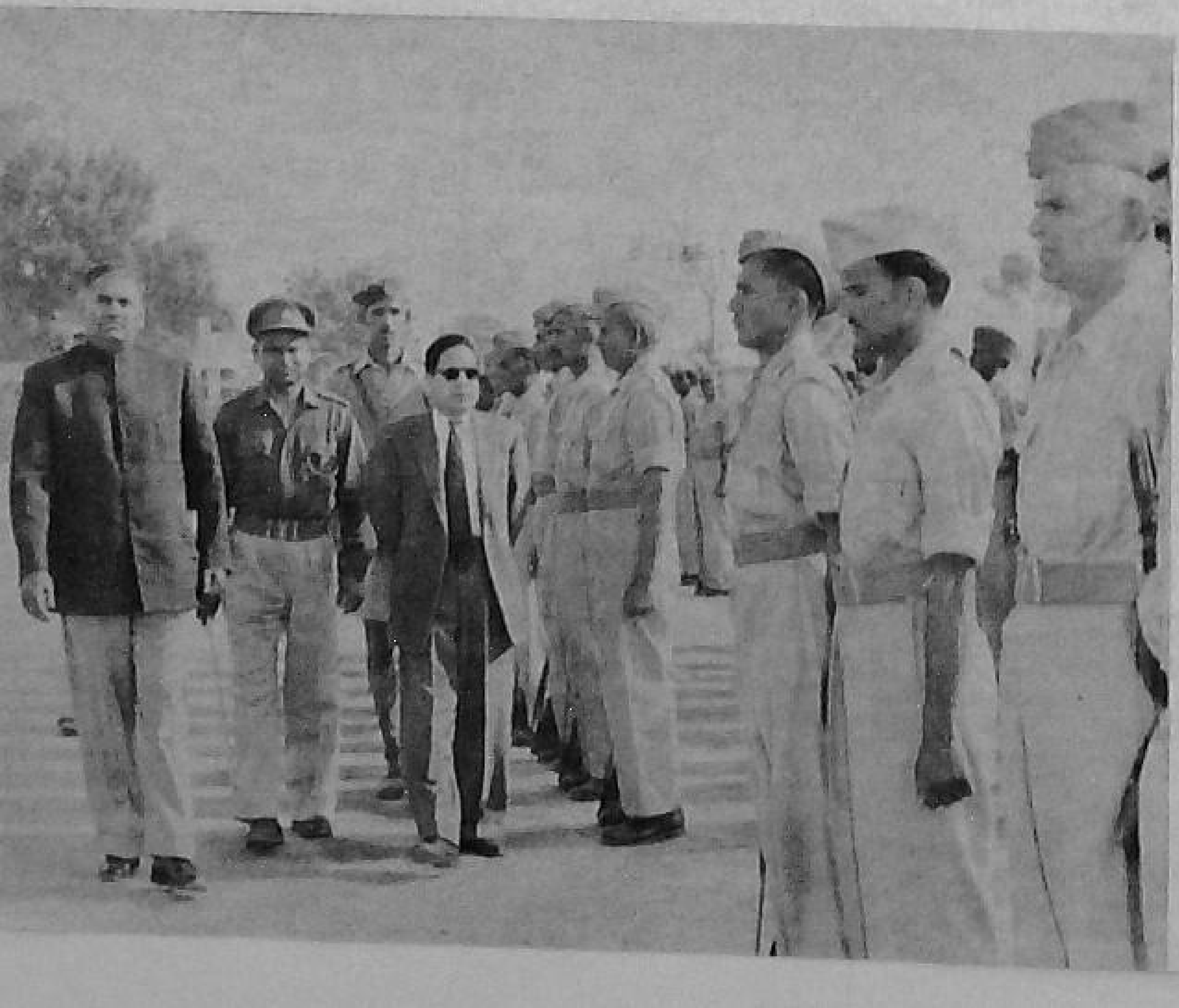


March-Past : *The Volunteers at a March-past ceremony in Meerut (U.P.)*

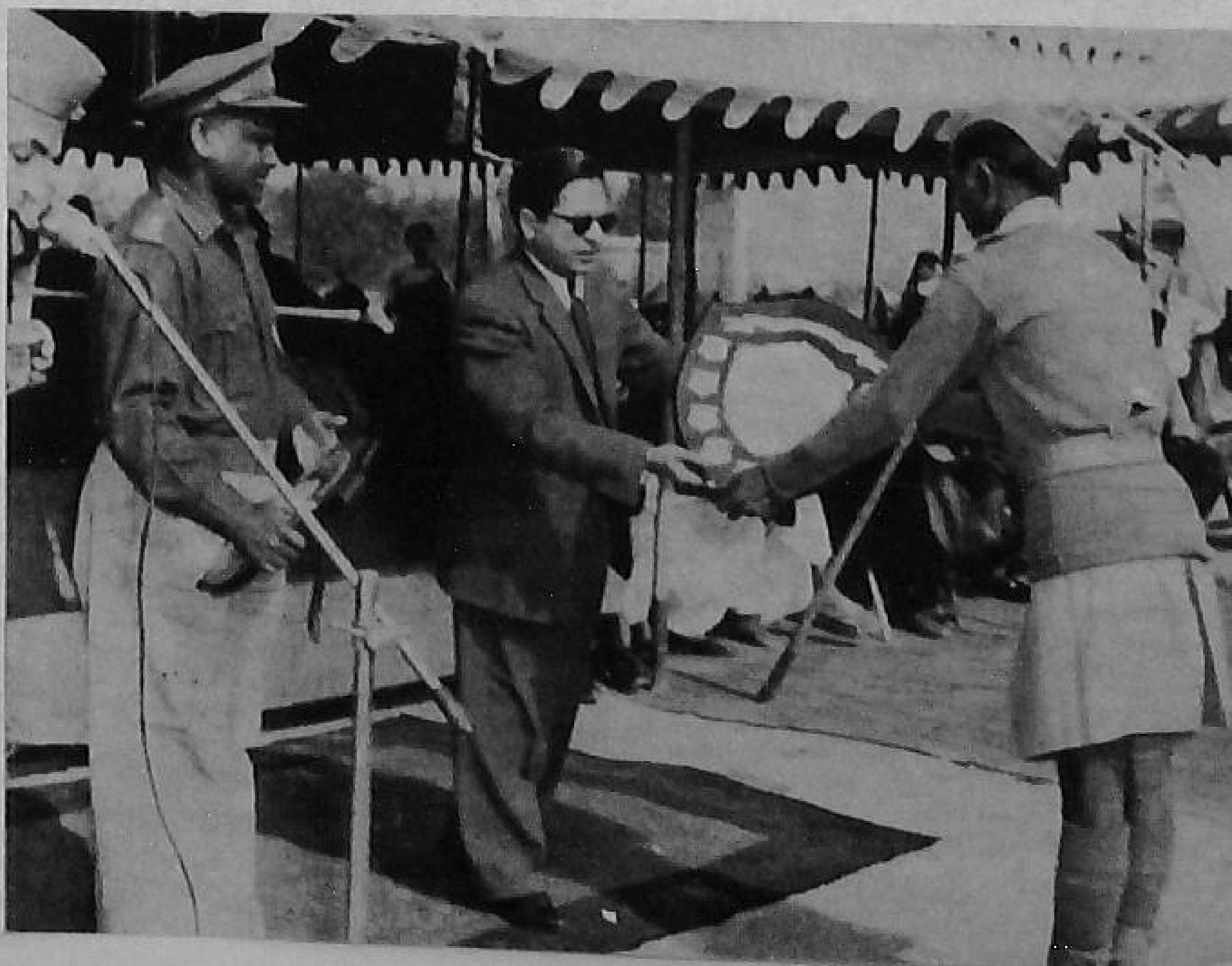
Keeping Fit : *The Volunteers are trained to keep themselves fit by doing physical exercise.*

U.P. DALPATIS UNDER TRAINING

Inspection-Parade : *Shri B. M. Tandon, I. A. S., inspecting the Parade. On his right is the District Organiser, P. R. D.*



Prize-Distribution : *A Volunteer receiving the shield for doing outstanding work.*



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VAISAKHA 1885

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Editor : VISHNU DUTT

(Asstt. Editor, Publications Division)

BUSINESS NOTICE

Single Copy : 15 nP.

Annual : Rs. 1·25

All enquiries regarding agency and rates of subscription and advertisements may be addressed to the Publications Division, Old Secretariat, Delhi-6. Editorial correspondence may be addressed to the Editor, *Panchayati Raj*, Ministry of Community Development & Cooperation, Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi.

LETTER

BETTER INCENTIVES NEEDED

Sir,

The entire community of Village Level Workers in the country is grateful to you for ventilating their grievances and experiences in their service through the columns of this esteemed journal.

In the entire extension programme, the role of the Village Level Workers is most significant and important. He is the one common extension worker who can work with all the people on all of their problems. No other extension worker has the opportunity to do this. All block extension specialists reach village people through him. The Gram Sevak is a multipurpose functionary with onerous jobs. Any new scheme related to community development that emerges from the Centre or States from time to time ultimately rests on him for its implementation at the village level. He is hailed as a "friend, philosopher and guide" to the village people. To quote Mr. Arthur Raper, Consultant, Community Development Division of the U.S. Government, "The creation of the Gram Sevak will go down in history as one of the greatest social inventions of the present era."

In the revolutionary programme of Community Development and Panchayati Raj, where so much stress is laid on this functionary, what are the incentives and channels of promotion open to him? In some States the service conditions of the V.L.Ws are not encouraging at all. Of the many resolutions passed at Ministerial and high level conferences of the C.D. Programme, recommending better service conditions and channels of promotion for the V.L.Ws only the prize competition scheme for the village level workers appears to have been adopted by all the States. No doubt this scheme does provide some incentive but it has its own limitations. The selection of a V.L.W. is based on certain standards of performance in various specified activities. Basically, his success depends on more than one factor, such as the personal hard work of a V.L.W., response and initiative from the people and the essential social and economic conditions of the areas concerned. There is no common yardstick for assessing or evaluating the work of V.L.Ws in view of these varying backgrounds. Little wonder that under the scheme, a really hard-working and efficient V.L.W. may not be selected as the best one.

Even this lame-duck scheme does not provide enough incentive to the V.L.Ws for better work. The prizes awarded are mere consolation prizes. What happens after a V.L.W. is adjudged as the best at the district, State and Union levels? He is hailed, his name is published and is awarded some cash

(*Continued on page* 7)

DEFENCE LABOUR BANK

S. K. DEY

SOLDIERS WHO fight on the front require nourishing food. At the heights they need light and warm clothing. Wars no longer are fought with bows and arrows, sticks, batons and spears. Even the rifle over which we marvel has grown out of date. The major battle against the enemy has to be fought up on the Himalayas, Air gets rarefied as we go up. Above 10,000 feet even breathing begins to be difficult. Those who go on pilgrimage up on the mountains to Kedarnath, Badrinath and Amarnath know this to their cost. To carry the body up is a hard enough task. Heavy weapons and equipment make it harder still. But lighter weapons and equipment cost enormous sums of money. Yet the country's freedom must be preserved. Without this, life is not worth living. Cost what it may, we must have a big, compact and modern army. Our Jawans must be strong enough to fight on the mountains. They must have effective, yet lightweight weapons and equipment. We must be prepared for a war of defence, even if there is no immediate offensive on the front. The enemy will keep his hands off our soil if he can be made to respect our strength.

We do not find enough resources for meeting the full needs of our Plan. We have, therefore, been trying to secure substantial assistance from friendly countries abroad. If we have to equip a modern army for national defence against a mighty enemy on top of this, it will call for resources formidably bigger. Friendly countries are willing to help. But they cannot meet all our needs. Every country has needs of its own. The assistance we secure from others abroad can only be marginal. The bulk of the resources have to be our own. Dependence on others is never good. Total dependence can lead but to subservience. How do we then muster resources enough for our survival?

Some one may ask: "Why not produce more currency notes from the Nasik Press?" Certainly, we produce paper enough for the purpose. But increase in the production of notes will only lead to increase in the cost of materials and services unless there is corresponding increase in production alongside. We have seen how increase in currency notes affected prices during the last World War. We are still suffering from the after-effects of it. How do we then produce enough money to support our Five Year Plan and also the near-blitz programme for defence? The stout-hearted sons and daughters of rural India ache to help the defence effort. But every one cannot be recruited to the army. Some should produce the food and other needs of life, also the needs of the army. The bulk of the army consists of Jawans who spring from the good earth of rural India. If the national Plans are to be fulfilled, the Jawans are to be fed and equipped adequately, rural India has to bear the major burden directly or indirectly. How does rural India carry out the task?

The village people constitute 80 per cent of the population of India. They grow food for the nation. They produce the bulk of the raw material for industries. Rural India still produces the bulk of industrial goods through arts and crafts, cottage, small and processing industries. Even the collections for the National Defence Fund have shown the warmth of the rural people to support the Jawans who are their kith and kin. The National Defence Fund so far collected, does credit to the people. But this does not go far enough. Because the funds so far collected will meet the expenses hardly for a week of a modern army. How do we then enable the village people to meet their share of the resources for the Plan, also for the Defence effort? They must earn more, if they are to contribute more. To earn more, they must first invest more. Investment means capital. Fluid capital is in woefully short supply. Other countries we know cannot and will not offer very much more than they are doing for us already. Resources for loans towards productive investments must then of necessity be created locally.

VILLAGE VOLUNTEER FORCE

The Village Volunteer Force was inaugurated by our Prime Minister in this context, at nine

in the morning on January 26, 1963, the anniversary of our Republic. The Force is to be raised in every one of the 557,000 villages of India. Panchayati Raj, Sahkari Samaj and Community Development agencies have all been asked to get themselves geared to this programme as the highest priority. The Volunteer Force has been asked to have a three-fold task—production, mass education and village defence. If the villages are to make progress, these tasks are inevitable at any time. When a nation of 700 million threatens from across the Himalayas, the way of life we profess and the freedom we are struggling to win for ourselves, these tasks grow to be a matter of life and death.

We have, therefore, introduced the Defence Labour Bank as an integral part of the Village Volunteer Force. We understand defence. But what is a labour bank? We keep money in banks for security. We go to the bank to cash a cheque or Hundi. The currency notes carry the promise of the Reserve Bank of India to pay back to us the number of rupees on the notes in any branch of the Bank. Village people do not have gold such as they can spare nor money. They do not have much of surplus in grains such as they can deposit in the Bank. But almost every one in the village has time running idle. Idle time leads invariably to quarrels followed by litigations. All these go to fatten the wrong people and drain away the village wealth. These leave behind perpetual feuds between families trailing from generation to generation. Can't we get this idle time from every one and deposit it as a Hundi in the village? We should perhaps then get it cashed in labour for the benefit of the whole village. Let us analyse this a little further and see how it can work.

Let us take a village of a thousand people including the aged and the children. We know from our study that out of 1,000 about 350 will be children. From 100 to 150 will be the aged. This leaves us, let us say, 500 able-bodied adults, men and women. Suppose they were willing to give 12 days of labour a year "on demand" to the bigger village family. Such promises could serve exactly the same purpose as promissory notes from the Reserve Bank. The promises could indeed form Hundis to be deposited in a special box maintained by the Panchayat. It will mean 500 men and women working for 12 days a year. This gives 6,000 labour days. The labour cost in the village today is Rs. 1.50 on an average. It will mean in the conditions of today, that the village community can create Rs. 9,000 worth of additional asset in a year from its idle labour. Those who could not offer their labour could be allowed to offer twelve days of their earnings, instead.

People do not normally save except for a purpose, for instance marriage, education of children, etc. Deposits in the Labour Bank likewise will only grow when there are concrete schemes based on the needs felt emotionally by the people themselves. The Community Development Agency and the Panchayat could work out in advance such community plans in the village. They could also relate the schemes intimately with the Village Production Plan. Village labour could then be utilised for community works like digging a village tank for fishery or irrigation, a village well for drinking water, village forest or orchard, village poultry or vegetable garden on Panchayat's own land. The labour could also for instance, be utilised for moulding bricks and tiles in the common Panchayat Kiln. These could be used for community purposes or could be sold out to individual users in the village against cash. The labour could also be utilised as Panchayat contribution to inter-village programmes approved by the Block Panchayat Samiti. Part of the labour could even be given as a taccavi carrying interest to individual cultivators for digging field channels, for field bunding and other soil conservation measures, for digging of wells, bunding of streams for irrigation, etc.

CHAIN REACTION

There can be manifold ramifications of the scheme. The proceeds of all these could go to add to the capital resources of the village Panchayat. Such resources built over a period of years can enable the village to have its own electric power, water supply and sanitary services. These can help create the village industrial estate catering to its own needs and those of surrounding areas in the field of its specialisation. Indeed there is an infinite variety of activities which the Panchayat could initiate on the resources of the Defence Labour Bank. The programme as can be seen, is based on Shram Dan but is envisaged

in a wider and different setting as can give it a new dignity besides permanence.

There is a common saying in India that every one feels tempted to rub oil on an already oiled head. If the village people were to begin practising self-help, there would begin a pull of a different character. The Block Panchayat Samiti would then be morally bound to bring in more resources to add. The Zilla Parishad in turn, the State Government and the Central Government, not to speak of other agencies, national also international, will all feel attracted to help likewise. Does not the Reserve Bank help by giving loans and their services in many ways to the constituent scheduled banks in the country? Do not the scheduled banks in turn, help to promote industries and commerce by loaning money from the Bank to add to the basic resources of enterprises and entrepreneurs? It is a chain process from whichever direction it begins. Once it starts from grassroots, like the tree it can gather strength as it travels upwards.

Based on the prosperity of the individual families and of the village panchayats, through the extended operation of the scheme of Defence Labour Bank, the higher units of our Government, namely, the State and the National Governments some day might raise even debentures in the name of the Panchayats and the people that dwell under their umbrella. Individual able-bodied adults will strengthen the Panchayat. Panchayat in turn will loan resources and other services to cater to the needs of the individuals. A spiral process can thus begin. There will be progressive increase in the wealth and well-being of every family. The nation will begin to grow to be the grand extension and embodiment of the family.

In the short run, the Village Labour Bank will act as the Defence Labour Bank. For, as we have mentioned earlier, we need the resources to support the Jawans on the front. We should produce more in the village based on mutual aid. We should utilise the surplus labour acting as a drag in the village community today for want of a creative outlet. When food is grown on community land, the proceeds can be invested in Defence Bonds and be held in the name of the Panchayat. Where it grows on individual holdings, the individual cultivator will reap the added harvest. He can first pay the instalments on loans taken and then invest the surplus in Defence Bonds in his own name or that of his children. Alternatively, he can take an Insurance Policy from the Life Insurance Corporation of India. More lives insured with L.I.C. will mean more resources to the Corporation. These in turn, can then help build up industries and finance other undertakings including agriculture. All these during the Emergency can go to strengthen our defence potential.

The value of money continues changing from period to period. The rupee today is worth hardly a quarter of what it was twenty-five years ago. Labour on the contrary never depreciates. Indeed, it has always been going up. The Village Labour Bank, if it can develop the strength and integrity expected of it, can offer a security perhaps stronger than the gilt-edged security offered today by government. Labour cannot be stolen and therefore does not require to be guarded. Gold or notes can be stolen and therefore cost more money to guard them. The Labour Bank will thus call for no chowkidars. All it demands are, self-help and mutual aid based on the wider interest of the village community.

The day-to-day working of the bank will call for a set of two simple registers (i) the Labour Contribution Register and (ii) the Labour Disbursement Register. The Labour Contribution Register will have a page for each of the contributors. Entries will be made of deposits and disbursement as in a bank ledger. In the Labour Disbursement Register, there will be account of community works or loans of labour given to individuals or groups. The names of the contributors will be entered here as cross checks against the disbursement entry in the Contribution Register. There will also be properly executed documents on taccavi loan taken by individuals or groups from the Defence Labour Bank. Thus two registers will constitute the main accounts of the Village Labour Bank of tomorrow —called today the Defence Labour Bank. All we need now are willing and understanding hearts as a nucleus to pulsate with the rhythm of New India now in her birth agonies. The Village Volunteer Force recruited in every village are to form this nucleus whose example as a vanguard can help mobilise able-bodied adults in the village as a whole.

(*Continued on page* 12)

WOMEN AND PRESENT EMERGENCY

INDIRA GANDHI

EVER SINCE Sita tossed aside her jewellery and rich raiment to follow her husband to the insecurity and rigours of the wilderness, she has been upheld as an ideal Indian woman. Swami Vivekananda called her : "the very type of the true Indian Woman". Life does not now require us to roam the forests, but the need for facing bravely up to hardships and privations, adjusting to changing conditions, and looking to the larger good of the community and the country will always be there.

In spite of the injustice of unequal laws and degrading social customs, even in ancient times women played a significant role in moulding family thinking. In *Kumarasambhava,* Kalidasa says : "The girl is the very life of the family". That is why the attitude of women in facing a national problem assumes tremendous importance.

There is no part of India, or indeed the world, which does not have its own heroines and glowing tales of their courage and determination in times of crises and danger.

DURING FREEDOM MOVEMENT

During our independence movement, women responded magnificently to Gandhiji's call, packed the prisons, faced bullets and in spite of abuse and assault, picketed foreign cloth and liquor shops so persistently that textile mills in Britain were forced to close down.

During the last War the heroic stand of Russian women, especially in Stalingrad, is well-known. In Yugoslavia, about two million women actively participated in the national liberation movement both in partisan combat units and as underground workers in occupied towns and villages. More than one lakh fought at the front.

In France and other European countries, women of all ages played a crucial part in their resistance movements, sacrificing their lives and if need be their honour too.

In England, women manned offices and factories and tilled the fields—in fact they took over almost all civilian activities so as to release their men folk for the actual fighting. For six long years they lived in black-outs, making the best of meagre rations and other shortages. They lived with danger hardly less than on the battle-field, for every day brought air raids and long hours of bombing. Through it all the nation's work went on. 'Business as usual' was the slogan.

One of the myriad tasks assigned to women was the folding of parachutes. This sounds simple enough but the work is of great precision as the slightest mistake might cost a life. To the accuracy which this task demanded, the women added a genuine feeling of dedication and devotion towards the unknown paratrooper who would use the parachute. This attitude was beautifully expressed by one of the girls in her verse :—

"May God give my heroes fair weather,
Let no parachute slither or slump
For today we go warring together
And my heart will be there at the jump."

Thus in war, are the women in their homes participants with the soldiers in the field.

Now, we too face war. The present lull in the fighting should deceive no one, for we cannot say when or where a fresh attack may come. For our country's honour and the future of our children we must be prepared.

WEALTH THROUGH SAVINGS

The military effort can be strengthened only in conditions of economic stability and progress. We must increase our production in the fields and in the factories by working harder and longer hours. Everyone can help by collecting aluminium and other such salvage material, by growing vegetables in homes and institutions. We must create wealth through savings. For a people already heavily burdened and struggling to stand up on their feet, to have the load of a war sounds an impossible imposition but this war is not of our making and we have no choice.

As President Roosevelt said : "War costs money—that means taxes and bonds—and there is a front on which all of us—every man, woman and child—can serve, and serve for the duration. We can all practise self-denial. We can also sacrifice some of our comforts to the needs of the men

in the service, and yet even some of our needs to their comforts." In India this will also help to keep down prices and enable our limited production facilities to concentrate on more essential commodities.

In the richer and more advanced countries of the world, gold reserves lie with the government, not with the people. In India, it is the opposite. Social usage, dating back to days when banks were unknown or few, has perhaps been responsible for a sentimental attachment to gold which is out of place in this country. We cannot afford to keep our savings idle. They must be put to work too—bringing in foreign exchange and helping the national effort. Let us break the enchantment of gold. This may mean a reorientation in our marriage and other customs which in my opinion will turn out to be a source of relief to the middle class. Other nations have changed according to the requirement of the times. Why not we?

India does not lack manpower. There is no need for women to go in for military training or to demand rifles which can be better utilised by others. There is need for fitness and discipline, both physical and mental.

THE HOME FRONT

Wars are won on the home front as well as on the battle-ground. The jawan must be assured that the home front is secure. The preparation of the civilian population is therefore a fundamental requirement of wartime. Knowledge dissipates fear, and allotment of work allays panic. Take whatever training is available. Join the Home Guards or civilian defence or the village volunteer force. It is proposed to have a citizens' corps to absorb those who do not fit into any of the existing schemes. Even if there is no shooting war, there are permanent advantages in the training and knowledge so gained.

Our hospitals are woefully under-staffed even now. New base hospitals must be equipped. We urgently need more nurses to cope with additional work. It is tragic that our wounded men should ever want for the best possible nursing care. First-Aid and Home Nursing are useful to the family and the community.

There are many jobs for which women are pre-eminently suited—the driving of cars and ambulances, the running of kitchens and canteens, working in hospitals as war assistants, as socio-medical visitors, writing letters in the regional languages and so on.

DIFFERENT CATEGORIES

There are different categories of women. Firstly those who are skilled and have jobs. Their names should be registered. Secondly, those who have had professional or other training, but are not utilising it, such as married women who are not working. Can they not give some time, daily or weekly? Amongst the untrained, there must be a number who could find time for acquiring training. But even those who have no special skill can be useful for knitting, sewing, packing and despatching, making bandages, acting as messengers and so on.

Women who are expert in these and similar vocations are required in connection with the welfare of defence personnel. The voluntary service of typists, stenographers, secretaries, could be a big help in curtailing the administration costs of the Citizens' Councils and other voluntary bodies. Uniform registration and training all over the country would enable workers to function without difficulty even if they had to move to other areas.

I hope these programmes will be regarded with the seriousness which they deserve and with a definite commitment of service. Practice now will lead to greater efficiency in times of danger. It is much easier for someone who is doing one type of work and is in touch with the people in her area to switch over to another job in case of emergency, than for one who is sitting idle to suddenly become active. So, while the aim of the training programmes is to prepare women for war, it would be much appreciated if they would utilize their talents and experience in community work now. Some of the work which needs urgent doing is public education, especially as regards civic duties, sanitation and nutrition, etc.

CONTINUOUS VIGIL

Let us spare a thought for the sentinels of our 2,500 miles long northern border, far from their families and home comforts—keeping a day and night vigil in temperatures that fall to minus 30 degrees and below, over mountains which are 18 to 20,000 feet high. At such heights frost forms on moustaches and beards. A cup of tea has to be gulped almost at boiling point as otherwise it would freeze. Slabs of ice have to be cut from frozen 'nullahs' to be heated for drinking and

cooking purposes. The day I went to Leh was a comparatively mild one and the sun shone dimly. Even so water spilt on the ground froze immediately. Metals gets so cold that touching a gun with bare hands gives metal burn. Gloves and socks tear fast and so are in constant demand.

Even in sections where the cold is not so acute there are plenty of other discomforts and the living is hard because of torrential rains and difficult terrain. Women can bring a ray of warmth, and in small ways soften the hardship by collecting 'amenities' for these at the front and for the wounded in hospitals. These include articles such as dry fruit, magazines and light literature in all the Indian languages, radios, gramophone records, heaters—all kinds of things. Lists are made available to the Amenities Committees of the Citizens' State Councils from time to time.

IRON DETERMINATION

Some days ago jogging along in a jeep in NEFA, we came across a grim reminder of the recent fighting—besides a charred incapacitated tank lay a battered helmet. I naturally wondered about its owner and his fate. Somewhere in India this man must have had a family—parents, sisters and brothers, perhaps a young wife, whose lives will now be darkened with sorrow. How many such homes? Words cannot bring solace but there are more concrete ways of showing our sympathy. These families are scattered in remote villages.

One way of helping them is to make known to them the medical and educational facilities such as scholarships, stipends, back grants, which have been made available by the State Governments. Some States have offered land and cash grants. Find out the position in your own State and work in close collaboration with the local authorities and the District Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Board. If the family is facing some other difficulty which cannot be solved locally bring it to the notice of the Citizens' Council, which may give immediate help.

The first effervescence of enthusiasm has subsided; let it be transmitted into iron determination, singleness of purpose and thorough preparedness to meet this challenge which threatens our land, our values, our way of life. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, "Fellow Citizens: We cannot escape history. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us in honour or dishonour, to the latest generation."

LETTER

(*Continued from page 1*)

prize or a cycle or a motor-cycle depending on the level at which he wins a prize. Generally, nothing follows after that. Only the greetings, praise and the mere consciousness that he has been adjudged as the best remain with him. It does not materially change his position in the service career. So, naturally the enthusiasm of the V.L.Ws in the scheme is waning. In order to provide an incentive for greater and sustained efforts on the part of the Village Level Workers the prize competition scheme should envisage improvement in their service conditions and to create definite channels of promotion to higher cadres in the Community Development programme.

Among the ranks of the Village Level Workers, there are matriculates, undergraduates and even graduates too. Except in a very few States the position of the V.L.Ws has not improved at all. After October 1963, we will be having about 50,000 V.L.Ws throughout the country. There are many V.L.Ws who have already completed ten years of service without any chances of future promotion. In Andhra Pradesh, for instance, there are about 4,000 Village Level Workers, and not even one per cent of them have been promoted to higher cadres so far. What real enthusiasm can there be in the V.L.Ws under such circumstances?

Community Development Programme has come to stay. It would be a permanent feature of our development plans. In view of the vital role of the V.L.Ws, the whole question of their service conditions, incentives and channels of promotion prevailing in the various States of the country should be considered afresh. As far as possible, a uniform pattern of service conditions and promotions should be evolved for the country as a whole.

Yours faithfully,

19-3-63 *E. DESINGU SETTY*

Chowdepalla Block,
Andhra Pradesh.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR STUDY AND RESEA

By Our Cor

VIGYAN BHAVAN was the venue of the second meeting of the National Council for Study and Research in Community Development on 20th March, 1963. The Council which consists of some of the most experienced persons in the country having a thorough knowledge of the rural problems, applied itself to some of the day-to-day issues of training and education which confront the Community Development Programme. The work of the Council had been considerably facilitated in view of the fact that three separate committees had met earlier and considered the various issues involved in a thoroughgoing manner.

S. K. DEY'S SPEECH

Welcoming the Members, the Chairman, Shri S. K. Dey, referred to the changed circumstances under which they were meeting and said that training and education was a vital subject at any time but it had acquired added importance and urgency in the present situation. He explained how the new programme of Village Volunteer Force and Defence Labour Bank had been conceived in view of the emergency and that the training programme required to be reoriented accordingly. He made particular reference to the National Institute at Mussoorie which should function as the nerve centre of all the training programme.

Continuing, Shri Dey remarked that the observations during the last few years had confirmed him in the belief that training was the most essential pre-requisite for the success of the programme. It had come as an agreeable surprise to him that the officials who had a background of training fared much better than those who had not had the advantage of such training.

Shri Dey, further, laid emphasis on the training of the leaders of the Yuvak Mandals and Mahila Mandals on which rested the future progress of Panchayati Raj and the Community Development Programme. He confirmed this statement by his recent experience in Orissa where the Village Volunteer Force being built around the Youth Clubs and Mahila Mandals was forging ahead much better than at many other places.

TRAINING OF GRAM SEVAKS

Rightly did the Council start its discussion on the subject of the training of Gram Sevaks, the key functionaries of the programme and continued it for nearly an hour before it could come to some decision. The members had a feeling that perhaps the Gram Sevak's training was not yet fully rooted in agriculture and that he still continued to function as a multi-purpose worker, dissipating his time and energy on more than one aspect of the Community Development Programme. Efforts were made by the representatives of the Ministry of C.D. & C. to remove such an impression. It was pointed out that a circular had already been issued to the effect that the Gram Sevak was to be entrusted with only one set of primary duties, that was, pertaining to agriculture and allied subjects. The representative of the Directorate of Extension Training dwelt at length to show that the training of Gram Sevaks was weighted in favour of agriculture and that the emphasis was on practical demonstration rather than theoretical knowledge. These replies obviously failed to satisfy some of the members. That is why, it was left open for a committee to make a suitable recommendation to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, if it so desired at a later stage, for the further study and modification of the Gram Sevaks' training programme.

TRAINING OF NON-OFFICIALS

Turning to the subject of the cut imposed on the budget of the training centres as a result of the national emergency, some members expressed grave concern and felt that this should have been avoided. The Minister promised to have the issue re-examined. Opposition was also voiced against the dropping out of the scheme of sammelans for non-officials. It was felt that such sammelans were all the more essential in the context of the emergency. It was, however, explained that the new scheme of Village Volunteer Force involved a more intensive training of the officials as well as the non-officials at various levels and as such the cancellation of the central scheme of sammelans would not be of much significance.

ARCH IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MEETS

respondent

TRAINING OF EXTENSION OFFICER (INDUSTRIES)

It was the subject of the training of the Extension Officers (Industries) which generated the greatest heat, raising the level of discussions to a new pitch. The subject under discussion was as to how integrated training could be imparted to the Extension Officers (Industries) in the field of Small Scale as well as Khadi and Village Industries. A member posed the question, "Are we first clear in our minds as to the programme of industries for which the industrial officers are required to be trained?" He made it clear that neither the programme of small scale industries nor that of Khadi and Village Industries had come into its own because of lack of certain fundamental policy decisions on the part of the Government at the highest level. The Industries Officer at the present moment was a man of "split personality" who did not know where he was going to. The members seemed to concur with the view that the training of the Extension Officers (Industries) needed to be supported by a well thought-out rural industrialisation programme based on certain firm policy decisions. After discussion at length it was agreed that the Extension Officers (Industries) must be given integrated training in the fields of small scale and Khadi and Village Industries and that the training institutions should be such as to sustain the emphasis properly on both. It was for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to determine in consultation with the Ministry of C.D. & C. as to which institution was best suited to undertake such an assignment.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE THREE COMMITTEES

Next, the recommendations made by the three committees set up earlier were discussed. One of the important recommendations approved was that an evaluation of the last three orientation courses at the National Institute of Community Development, Mussoorie, should be made by the Research Sub-Committee. It was also agreed that the constitution and organisational structure of the National Institute of Community Development should be examined afresh.

The Council took note of the delay in the setting up of Panchayati Raj Training Centres by some State Governments as well as of inadequate attendance at some of the existing centres. The minister agreed to personally intervene in the matter and to approach the State Governments concerned.

The Council next considered the arrangements suggested by the Committee for affording supervision and guidance to the Panchayati Raj Training Centres. After discussion, it was agreed that the question should first be referred to the All India Panchayat Parishad for its views, and the National Council should thereafter take a final decision after considering the Parishad's recommendations.

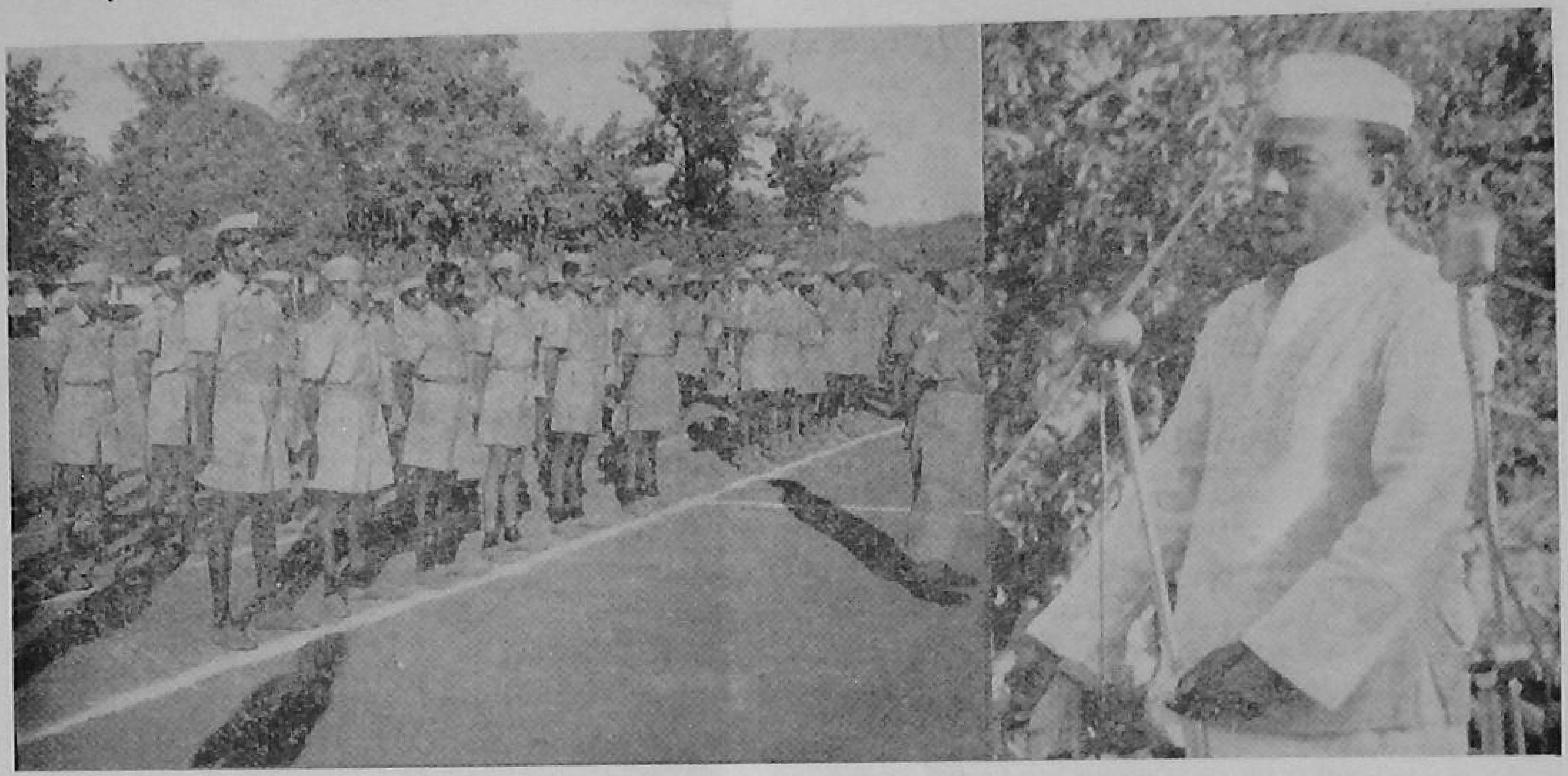
It was agreed that the good features of the National Discipline scheme should also be incorporated into the Scout Training Programme. The Council desired that the suggestion be forwarded to the Ministry of Education for necessary action.

The proposal to organise student camps in rural areas was explained to the Council. It was pointed out that the proposal stemmed from the Deshmukh Committee's recommendation for National Service and the present proposal embraced the different age-groups and provided for camps to work on specific field projects. The idea was to integrate similar activities which were being projected by different Ministries and organisations and directing them to specific programmes which would lead to intensification of the Village Volunteer Force programmes. The Council desired that the Ministry should go ahead with the proposal.

The Council also considered the arrangements for the training of youth and women workers. A suggestion that in all existing camps for training, especially those for the Gram Sahayaks, women trainees should also be associated, at least for a part of the period of training on a common programme with men, was readily accepted.

In view of the increasing importance of training of youth and women workers, the Council desired that the possibility of expanding this programme by utilising all available resources, like funds at the disposal of the Planning Commission (Public Co-operation Division), Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ministry of Community Development, P.L. 480, U.S. AID; Ford Foundation, etc., should be examined.

V. V. F. MARCHES ON



Shri S. K. Dey, Union Minister, addressing an impressive rally of Dalpatis and Updalpatis of the Village Volunteer Force at Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh.

THE VILLAGE Volunteer Force Programme, which was inaugurated throughout the country on Republic Day this year has started taking shape. By and large, the people in the rural areas have begun to understand the implications of the scheme and have responded enthusiastically to the appeal made by the Prime Minister in his inaugural address. According to the reports received so far the progress achieved by various States is as follows:

ANDHRA PRADESH

The Village Volunteer Force and Defence Labour Bank schemes began to operate from Republic Day when over 15,000 Panchayats throughout the State organised meetings and took the pledge. So far, 88,000 persons have enrolled themselves for the V.V.F. and another 76,000 for the Defence Labour Bank. About Rs. 33,000 have been collected in cash as donations from the villagers in lieu of voluntary work.

About 15,000 units of the V.V.F. are expected to be started with an average of 500 per unit. Thus about 75 lakhs of people are expected to be covered by the programme. It has been estimated that if all the 8 million able-bodied men in the rural areas take part in the programme, it will be possible to turn out work worth over eleven crores of rupees a year.

ASSAM

The State's V.V.F. programme was initiated in all the 2,535 panchayats. It is understood that pledges have been taken by the people in most of the panchayats and programmes have been chalked out to push through several rural works like digging of compost pits, irrigational channels etc. Several Gram Sabhas held meetings and the scheme was explained in detail to the people.

BIHAR

Bihar has responded magnificently to the V.V.F. scheme. The scheme lays stress mostly on civil defence. Production drive and mass education have not yet been fully geared up. Over 30 lakhs of people spread over 10,000 panchayats have enrolled themselves for the V.V.F. scheme.

All-out efforts are being made to explain the implications of the scheme to the people at the district, block and village levels. Training camps

have been started at several places including Bhagalpur, Deogarh, Sonepur and Ranchi.

Bihar's Citizen's Defence Council proposes to construct a stretch of 500 miles of metalled road by voluntary labour covering Bhaisalotan in Champaran to Galgalia in Purnea. It has also started mobilising the people to offer shramdan for completing the 70-mile road from Kharagpur to Purnea.

GUJARAT

The villagers in small groups took the pledge in over 10,000 panchayats in the State. Each panchayat has drawn up its own programme of development works to be executed by voluntary labour.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

The State has nearly a thousand panchayats. The Prime Minister's broadcast on the V.V.F. was listened to by the people who had gathered specially on the occasion. Group meetings and discussions organised by the panchayats enthused a new spirit of work among the villagers. The membership of the V.V.F. in the State has exceeded two lakhs. A problem of great importance in raising agricultural production in the State has been the reclamation of the waste lands. The V.V.F., it is stated, will now move into this area and ensure that cultivation is taken up. It is also reported that plant protection drive and the campaign to grow more fruits will be wholly implemented by the V.V.F.

KERALA

The V.V.F. and the D.L.B. were inaugurated by all the 922 panchayats in the State on Republic Day. People in groups went to listen to the Prime Minister's inaugural speech and later took the pledge.

The State Government has prescribed a target of 200 volunteers for each panchayat. Against this target, about 127,997 persons have so far been enlisted. Registers were opened and donations to the tune of Rs. 23,000 were received in cash being the monetary value of voluntary labour. In addition, 66,000 persons have also promised to donate labour under the D.L.B. scheme.

One Dalpati has been appointed for each panchayat. In addition, 7,029 Updalpatis

The Village Volunteer Force of Bhakuamari Village in Assam digging a kilometer long irrigation channel as part of its Production drive.

have been appointed to be incharge of squads which have been organised ward-wise.

In some of the panchayats, separate women units led by lady Dalpatis have been organised.

MADHYA PRADESH

Pledges were taken in most of the panchayats numbering over 10,000. Over 372,000 persons have so far enrolled themselves for the V.V.F. scheme.

MADRAS

All the panchayats numbering over 12,500 convened public meetings, hoisted the national flag, listened to the Prime Minister's broadcast, took the pledge and formally inaugurated the scheme on Republic Day by starting development works.

The rural people of Madras have made a very encouraging response to the scheme. According to reports received so far, about 1 lakh and 76 thousand people have enrolled as V.V.F. members and about 14,000 people have joined the D.L.B. units.

A women's wing of the V.V.F., first of its kind in India, with a strength of about 360,000 women in the villages in the State is being organised. About 3,000 women have already joined the women's units in the V.V.F.

MAHARASHTRA

The V.V.F. scheme is being implemented through Zila Parishads. The response to the scheme is reported to be generally satisfactory.

MYSORE

Over 3 lakhs of people have enrolled themselves for the V.V.F. scheme, launched throughout the State covering nearly 75,000 panchayats. All the panchayats had preliminary meetings to form emergency committees and to chalk out programme of action to be implemented by the V.V.F. In most of the villages a start was made for the implementation of the scheme by undertaking some sort of work with the shramdan of the villagers. The works undertaken include digging of compost pits, drinking water wells, school buildings and repairs to tanks and drains.

ORISSA

Orissa's Chief Minister, Mr. Patnaik, initiated the V.V.F. scheme in the State. Pledges were taken in all the panchayats in the State numbering over 2,300.

PUNJAB

The V.V.F. scheme has been organised throughout the State. Pledges were taken to offer voluntary labour. According to one report, a 55-mile stretch of road has been built entirely by voluntary labour just at the outskirt of Ludhiana.

UTTAR PRADESH

In U.P. nearly 2 lakhs of people have already enrolled themselves in the V.V.F. All the Panchayats in the State numbering over 72,000 have drawn up elaborate scheme to develop various rural works in the area entirely by shramdan. Good progress is also reported to have been made by the Defence Labour Bank scheme.

WEST BENGAL

Nearly 75,000 persons have enrolled themselves for the V.V.F. scheme. People in most of the panchayats numbering over 6,000 listened to the Prime Minister's inaugural broadcast and took the special pledge. Reports have also come in of roads being built, specially in the Midnapur district by voluntary labour.

UNION TERRITORIES

Over 10,000 people in Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yenam have enlisted themselves for the V.V.F. In Delhi, so far 8,000 volunteers have joined the V.V.F. The V.V.F. scheme was inaugurated in all the panchayats in Himachal Pradesh and some 25,000 persons have enrolled themselves in the V.V.F.; 15 lakh man-days have been promised to be donated towards the Defence Labour Bank.

In Tripura, special meetings were held in all the 110 Gaon Sabhas where panchayats have been established so far. About 7,000 persons have enrolled themselves for the V.V.F.

DEFENCE LABOUR BANK

(*Continued from page* 4)

NEW WAR OF LIBERATION

Only liberation from alien rule was secured on August 15, 1947. Freedom for the people remained still to be won. Battle for freedom will be a long drawn out one. We have enemies still abroad with greedy eyes on us. We have even more formidable ones within including many who are unreconciled to the "writing on the wall" to which they got subjected after our Independence. These are the ghosts of centuries. These are the people lurking around in all walks of life not excluding administration, politics, trade, commerce and other sectors. Freedom has no meaning on a hungry aching body. But the village family must be a society of free people, if national freedom is to be real. Village can grow to be a free society only when it acts as a composite enlarged family; when the strong in the village will begin to pull the weak up in their direction; when the intelligent ones will help those who are less so, to move forward under the leadership which they can provide; in other words, when the strong and the intelligent will cease to exploit the weak for their own profit or aggrandisement.

The Hindi-Chini conflict of today is not a conflict in the frontier alone. It is the reflection of the inner conflict of ideologies—indeed of the eternal struggle between good and evil in man and in his community. The battle has to be fought on the Himalayas; equally so on the frontiers which have divided our people till now between themselves. Community effort alone can make this a possibility. Defence Labour Bank is the capital. Village Volunteer Force is the new army to fight the new war of liberation.

DEBATE ON PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Prime Minister's Tribute to C.D. Programme

THE PROGRAMME of Community Development and Co-operation figured pr minently in the debate in the Lok Sabha on the President's address during the Budget session of Parliament. Members were generally critical of the actual working of the programme. The Prime Minister, Shri Nehru who began his reply to the debate with direct reference to the Community Development and Panchayati Raj paid glowing tributes to the Programme and described it "as one of the most hopeful things in India today." We give below relevant portions of the speeches made by the Prime Minister and other members of the House on the subject.

R. S. PANDEY

Shri R. S. Pandey, who moved the motion of thanks on the Address by the President, referred to the work of the C.D. & C. Ministry. Speaking in Hindi, Shri Pandey said that as a result of the steps taken by Government, the agricultural production had gone up by about 40 per cent since 1949-50. Panchayati Raj had been introduced in nine States and it was hoped that the remaining States, too, would follow suit. The co-operative movement had also spread on a wide scale. He maintained that despite the increase in per capita income, poverty continued to be the bane of the country. It was, however, a matter of satisfaction that the nation had taken upon itself the task of raising the living standards of the masses.

A. K. GOPALAN

Shri A. K. Gopalan said: "I want to say something about the functioning of the volunteer force. I have very serious objection to it...... I want to know whether it is Government's intention that these volunteer force units and labour banks should consist of only a certain section of the people. If that is the intention, they have to say so definitely, that they want only certain sections of the people in such organisations. A thorough inquiry should be made into this."

P. G. KARUTHIRUMAN

Shri P. G. Karuthiruman said : "........In the present emergency, it is not only a question of fighting in the frontiers. The question of the farmer fighting in the farm is, in fact, the most important thing. We should see that the farmer gets not a lucrative price, but at least a reasonable and fair price for his produce. ......The floor price that has been fixed is unreasonable. By that we are not helping the agriculturists. Indirectly we are asking them not to grow more food. They will turn to cash crops, and production of foodgrains will in due course go down, there is no doubt about that ....The ordinary farmer does not know the floor or ceiling price and the traders take maximum advantage. ....Unless Government take serious action and unless co-operative societies handle the trade, the poor farmers of our country will be the victims of the traders; they will not reap the harvests of their fields."

P. R. PATEL

Shri P. R. Patel said: "........I believe that unless we double our agricultural production, we will not be able to get through our Third Five Year Plan, and then the prosperity of the country will be at stake. Agriculture, no doubt, is the base. But I must say that agriculturists are the base of agriculture, and unless they are looked after well, agriculture is not going to prosper and agricultural production is not going to be doubled.

The policy towards agriculture has to be changed. Today the agriculturists are required to produce more. But are they ever consulted regarding the prices to be fixed for their commodities, regarding the difficulties that they encounter? Are their organisations ever consulted? The only thing that we talk in this Address is about agriculture, not agriculturist. What is the economic condition of an agriculturist? Unless this problem is considered in

this light, we are not going to improve our agriculture. Unless agriculture improves, our prosperity would be imaginary. For the prosperity of our nation, the first thing needed is improvement in agriculture; it is the base. But the first base is the agriculturist and the second base is agriculture. If their problems and difficulties are considered and remedied, everything else will improve."

P. S. DESHMUKH

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh said: "......Nowhere else in the world is extension, which always refers to agriculture, divided into two separate parts. Unfortunately, in this country there is an extension directorate in the agricultural department as well as a Community Development Department which are supposed to do exactly the same thing. What we have done is to divide one activity into two and then we ask and strive for co-ordination and co-operation. .... I also do not understand how after the establishment of Panchayati Raj, Community Development can have any *locus standi* or any separate existence. The Block Development Officers and the agricultural department officers have now been transferred to Panchayati Raj; yet the Community Development Department has not shown any signs of even diminishing the personnel under it."

SHIVAMURTHI SWAMY

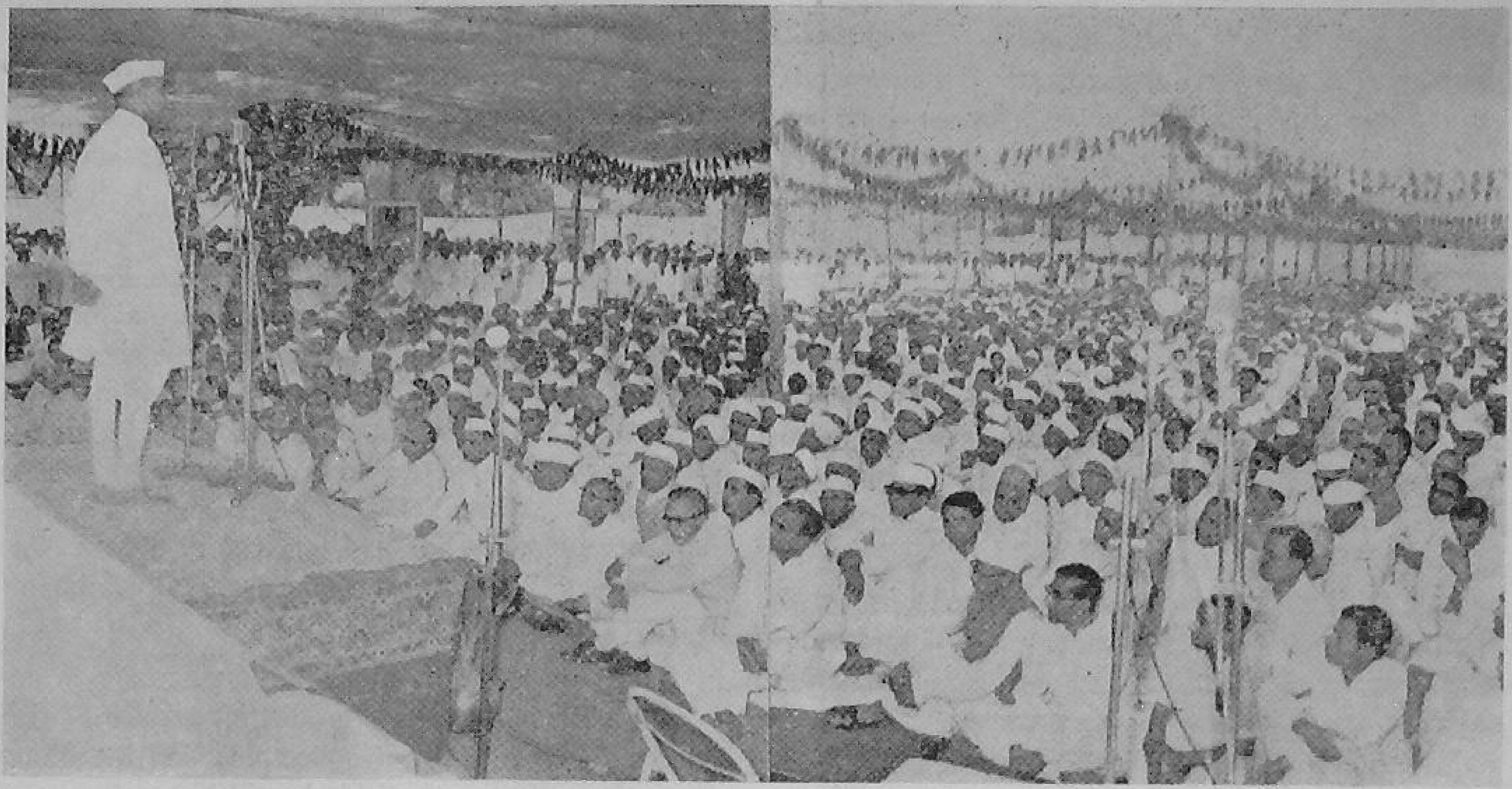
Shri Shivamurthi Swamy who spoke in Hindi said that members of both sides of the House had been critical of the working of the Community Development programme. He drew the attention of the House to report by Shri A. D. Gorewal; in the course of which it had been pointed out that the same work was being done in the country but the basic aims and objectives with which the programme had been launched had not so far been realised.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister, Shri Nehru, replying to the debate, began with a reference to Shri Shivamurthi Swamy's criticism of the working of the Community Development programme and said: "Just prior to my getting up, the Hon. Member who was speaking said something about Community Development schemes, something very derogatory to their working—that is, money being wasted upon them. I was surprised to hear him say that and to quote from somebody whom I do not know. Anyhow, the Community Development scheme has developed into something different and much bigger—that is, Panchayati Raj—and I would venture to say that one of the most hopeful things in India today is Panchayati Raj and, connected with it, the Community Development. I do not mean to imply that all its working all over India is perfect or even good. We will have to remember the extent of it, the vastness of the domain covered by it, and there could be little doubt that in many places it has not come up to expectations. It may be that it was the Hon. Member's misfortune to visit some of those places where it has not done well. But this Panchayati Raj or Community Development scheme touches the very basic problem in India; that is, I should say, to rouse up the hundreds of millions of our people who live in rural areas, to make their minds work differently. It is a terribly difficult thing to change people's minds. ...... People have a way of sticking in old ruts. A thing may be past and gone, and yet they do not realise the changes that have taken place. Now, we having lived for—I do not know—thousands of years as people and attached to various habits—the farmer in the way he ploughs and the way he lives and all that, and others too—it is a very difficult task. And yet, that is the basic task in India. Not all the factories we put in India can solve the problem; they will help to the extent the factories will help the farmer to change his mind.

That is the basic task set before Community Development and Panchayati Raj, to develop in the people the spirit of self-reliance and a new thinking of the new way and understanding of the new world. After considering the whole problem as hundred per cent in India, if we succeed 25 or 30 per cent in India, it is an amazing success, because it covers hundreds of millions of people, and it has the seeds in it of greater success to come. Therefore, let us by all means try to find out how to improve these things, but to run them down means running down something that holds the greatest promise in India."

PANCHAYATI RAJ DAWNS IN GUJARAT



Shri Morarji Desai, Union Finance Minister, formally inaugurating the three-tier system of Panchayati Raj in Gujarat State on April 2, 1963.

PANCHAYATI RAJ has come into operation in Gujarat from April 1. This, however, does not mean that there were no village panchayats functioning in the State till now. In fact, Gujarat is one of the pioneer States in which over 12,000 Village Panchayats have been functioning fairly satisfactorily and successfully for a long time. An important feature has been the considerable degree of unanimity in the elections of Panches and Sarpanches, eschewing the bitterness and jealousy which sometimes mark the processes of election. There are many panchayats with women members, and a few all-women Panchayats also.

It was a sheer accident that mainly due to the reorganisation of the State, once in 1956 and again in 1960, it could not come in the forefront of the implementation of the programme of Panchayati Raj. When at last, things were all set for the ushering in of the "Gram Swaraj" last year, it received an unexpected set-back due to the emergency forced on us by the Chinese invasion. It was felt that the 'luxury' of undergoing direct elections, particularly to the Zila Parishad, were not appropriate in the context of the circumstances then prevailing. However, as the emotional upsurge gradually yielded to a new sense of resolute determination to build up the united strength of the people, it was recognised that development could proceed hand in hand with defence and is actually part of defence preparedness. Fresh thinking was brought to bear on the subject. The vital role which Panchayats have to play in mobilising rural manpower for defence—the concept of the Village Volunteer Force—was emerging and it was realised that Panchayati Raj should no longer wait in the wings, particularly when the stage was set and everyone was ready to act his part. The only important feature of the scheme which is being held in abeyance during the emergency is the provision of direct elections to the district Panchayat bodies, which is being substituted by making the members of the existing district local boards—elected representatives—*ex-officio* members of the new organs vested with wide powers.

THREE-TIER SYSTEM

The experience gained by the other States in the working of Panchayati Raj has been drawn

upon in evolving the Gujarat scheme which is of a far-reaching character with many distinguishing features.

It is a three-tier structure with the Gram Panchayat at the base and the Zila Panchayat at the apex, with the Taluka Panchayat standing midway between the two. Those towns or large villages which have a population of more than 10,000 but not more than 20,000 will have Nagar Panchayats in place of Gram Panchayats.

The village Panchayat is directly elected. The existing Gram Panchayats (elected bodies) are to continue. The taluka Panchayat will have as its members the Sarpanches of all village Panchayats and Pramukhs of Nagar Panchayats situated in the taluka. Besides, the co-operative societies of the taluka will also be represented on the taluka Panchayat. The M.L.A. of the area, the mamlatdar (tehsildar) and Presidents of Municipal Committees of towns situated in the taluka will be associate members.

The Zila Panchayat will consist of the Pramukhs of the taluka panchayats (who will be elected) and one more representative elected by each taluka body, constituting one half of the district Panchayat, and directly elected members constituting the other half (for the duration of the emergency, old district local board members step in here), with M.Ps. and M.L.As. of the district and the district collector as associate members.

At all levels, the less privileged sections—women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes—are to be represented, by direct election on the Gram and Zila Panchayats, and by co-option on the Taluka Panchayats. At the village level there is to be at least one seat for the scheduled castes even if there is a single scheduled caste family in the village, and proportionately more according to the population. There is provision also for coopting members with experience in the field of education.

WIDE POWERS

So much for the constitution. As for the functions and powers, the elected bodies at all levels have been vested with wide powers, provided with funds and powers to raise resources to enable them to discharge their functions effectively and also equipped with the necessary complement of trained administrative personnel.

Agriculture and animal husbandry, public health and medical relief, district-level public works, social welfare, lands, co-operation, small and cottage industries, and, last but not the least, primary education are among the important subjects which will be entrusted to the Zila Panchayats and correspondingly to the taluka and village bodies. It is estimated that on the average a Zila Panchayat will administer a development budget of nearly Rs. 2 crores annually.

Cent per cent of the land revenue collections will be made over to the Panchayati Raj bodies to constitute their main financial resources. They will be in charge of land revenue collection and related work at the respective stage. They have also been empowered to levy taxes and fees. Besides, the State Government will provide appropriate financial assistance for works of schemes transferred to them from Government departments.

The services of administrative personnel from Panchayat secretaries to district development officers (of the rank of collectors) and including extension officers of all kinds will be made available to the Panchayati Raj bodies. There will be a special Panchayat Cadre reinforced by officers from the State cadres. A Panchayat Service Selection Board will also be set up.

All the 175 taluka panchayats and the Zila Panchayats have been constituted. (The small, sparsely populated Dangs district is not being covered at this stage.)

PANCHAYAT COUNCIL

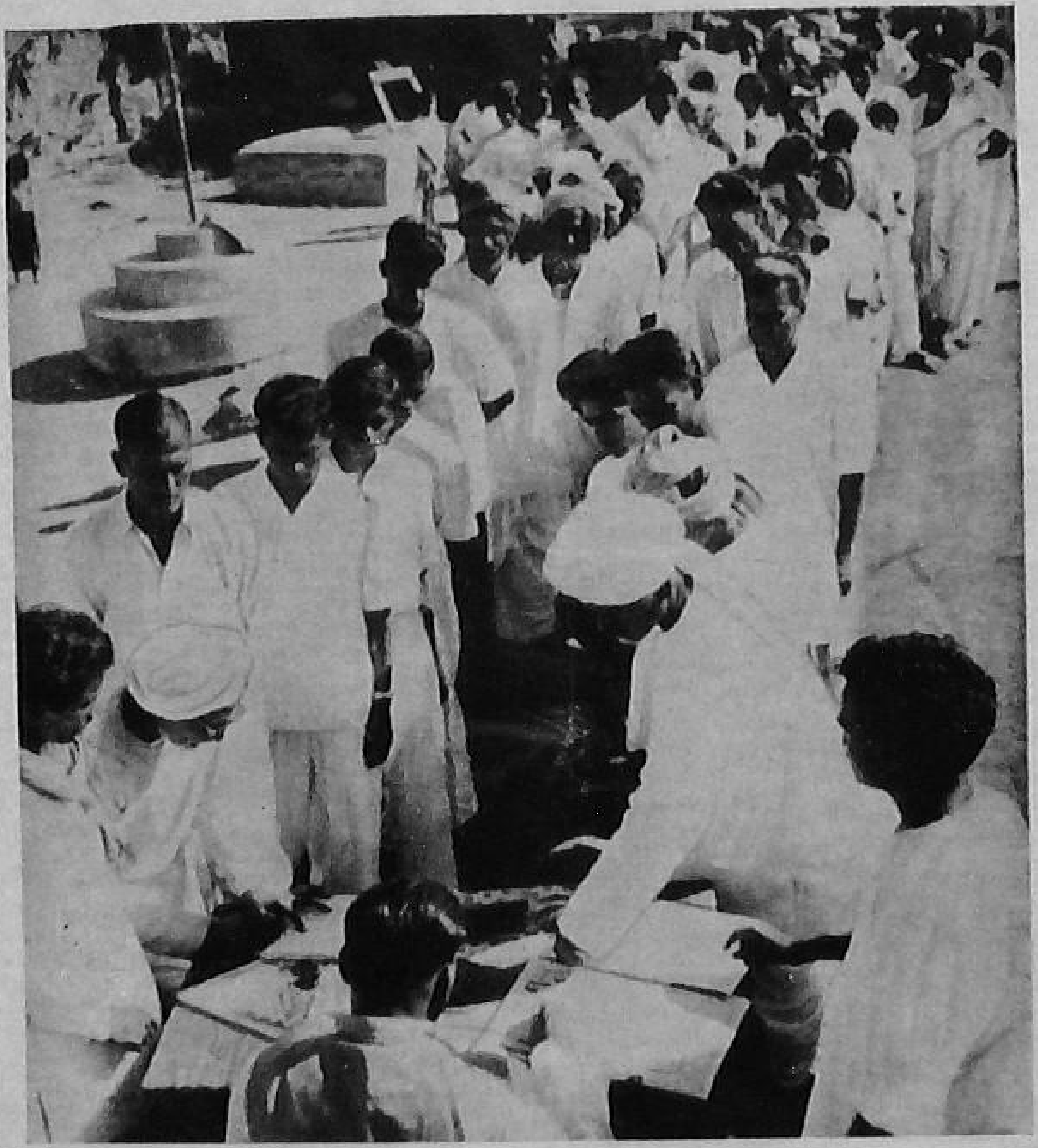
A State Panchayat Council, with the Minister in charge as chairman, is also to be set up to study the problems which may arise in the implementation of the programme. A director of Panchayats will be appointed to look into the functioning of the representative bodies at the different levels and keep the machinery in smooth gear.

The Taluka Panchayats have been formally inaugurated on April 2 at a function in Ahmedabad by the Union Finance Minister.

Two weeks later, the State Chief Minister inaugurated the Zila Panchayats at Rajkot and the Union Minister of Community Development and Co-operation will inaugurate the Gram Panchayats at Baroda on May 1, which will thus be invested with double significance because on that day three years ago the State of Gujarat was formed.

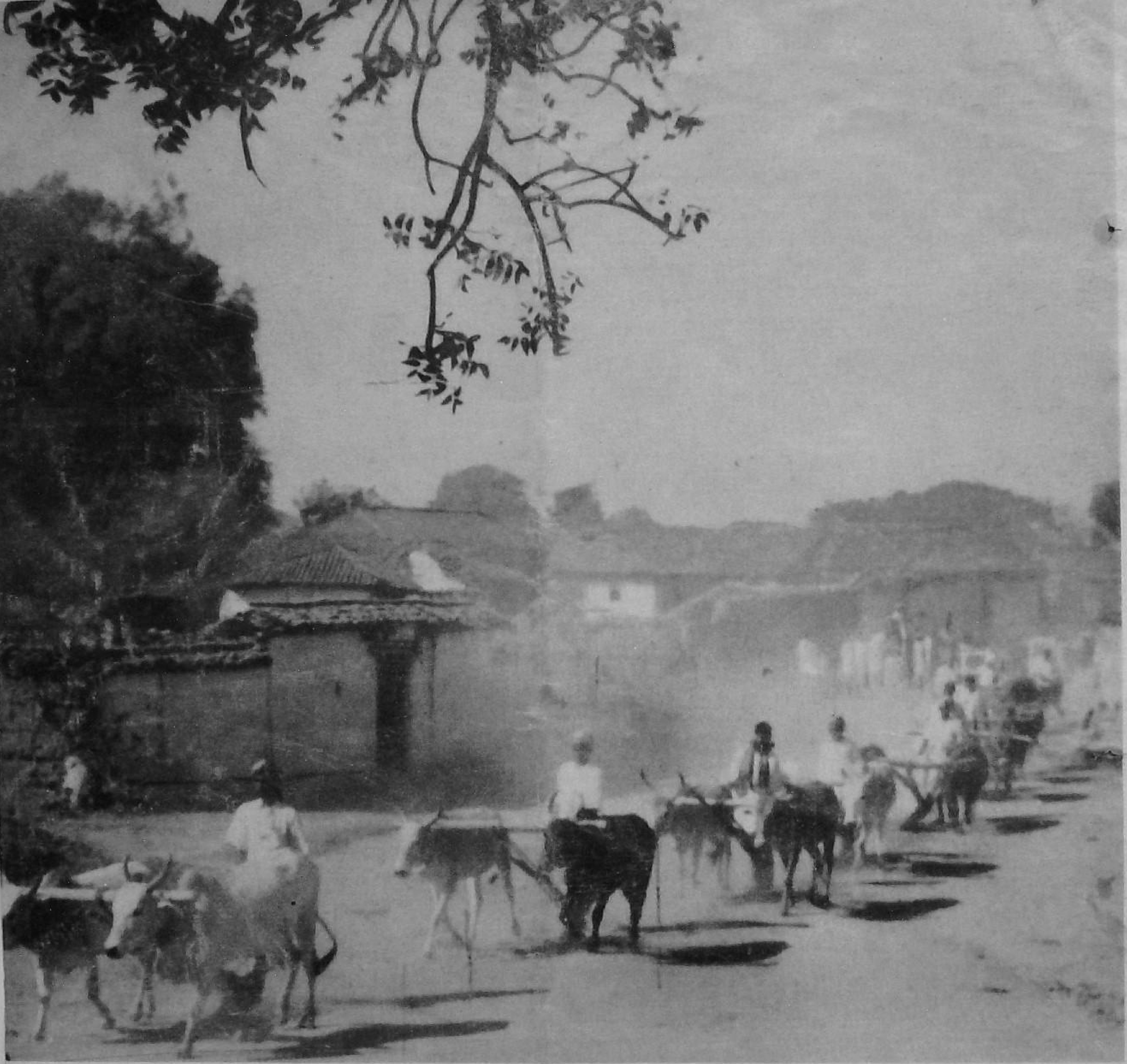
V. V. F. AROUND THE STATES

Members of the Village Volunteer Force taking pledge on the Republic Day in Pondicherry.



The members of the Village Volunteer Force in Gowdelli Village in Mysore taking the pledge and signing the oath register on the Republic Day.

In Assam, the State Labour Minister, Shri K. P. Tripathi, inaugurated Village Volunteer Force at Barbasna Gaon Sabha in Dibrugarh on Republic Day.



The Village Volunteer Force of Village Bowrampet in Hyderabad taking the ploughs en masse *to the fields for cultivation.*

Printed by the Manager, Government of India Press, Faridabad, and published by the Director, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Delhi-6, on behalf of the Ministry of Community Development and Co-operation.

Regd. No. D—877.